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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AMBIGUITY IN COMMUNICATION

by

KAREN ELAINE KOVACH

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1986

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Supervisor

.....Mitchell.....

.....David D. Wangler.....

Date...Sept. 23/86.....

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with love and affection to my parents, Mike and Helen Kovach, my sisters, Valerie and Alta Mae and their families, Guy, Gerry, Michael, Monique and Tamaira, who have always been there and continue to be a source of caring and support.

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at some of the basic aspects of the communication process. In order to do this, it is necessary to look at two parts of communication that have been defined previously - the verbal and the nonverbal. From that point, the author has chosen to reintegrate them back into the total process in which they belong.

In isolating the verbal from the nonverbal, a problem arises in that the process of communication is reduced to rather simple terms and a number of redundancies occur. It is, however, part of the nature of any science and any attempt to analyze, that such problems do occur. To further our understanding of ourselves and the manner in which we function in this world, it is at times necessary to do this.

A discussion of the verbal aspect of communication includes a definition of language (the verbal aspect of communication), language as a function of defining our reality, the levels of verbal communication (object and relationship), and a summary of problems arising in the attempt to constrict language to only definable forms.

In the section on nonverbal communication, the author has defined the term in the manner which is most commonly perceived and then has extended the defintion to include what Bateson would term "the language of relationship." Some of the characteristics of nonverbal communication are discussed and then, since nonverbal communication is essentially nonverbal, manifestations of it are summarized.

Subsequently, since the communication process has been dissected, the author felt it necessary to reintegrate the basic structures and to determine how they integrate with each other.

The last section includes a discussion of the implications that the communication process has on the process of therapy.

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I must also acknowledge the proofreader of this thesis. I know that it was a tedious and painstaking job and I appreciate the time and effort that Horst spent in making parts of this work acceptable.

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I. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

A. Introduction

Metalogue

Daughter: Daddy, why do things get in a muddle?

Father: What do you mean? Things? Muddle?

Daughter: Well, people spend a lot of time tidying things, but they never seem to spend time muddling them. Things just seem to get in a muddle all by themselves. And then people have to tidy them up again.

* * *

Daughter: But Daddy, isn't that a funny thing--that everybody means the same when they say "muddled" but everybody means something different by "tidy." But "tidy" is the opposite of "muddled," isn't it?

Father: Now we begin to get into more difficult questions. Let's start again at the beginning. Now you said, "Why do things always get in a muddle?" Now we have made a step or two--and let's change the question to, "Why do things get in a state which Cathy calls 'not tidy?'" Do you see why I want to make that change?

Daughter: Yes, I think so--because if I have a special meaning for "tidy" then some other people's "tidies" will look like muddles to me--even if we do agree about most of what we call muddles.

* * *

Daughter: Why do my things get the way I say isn't tidy?

Father: It's just because there are more ways which you call "untidy" than there are ways which you call "tidy."

Daughter: But that isn't a reason why-

Father: Oh, yes, it is. And it is the real and only

and very important reason.

Daughter: Oh, Daddy! Stop it.

Father: No, I'm not fooling. That is the reason, and all of science is hooked up with that reason .... --

(Gregory Bateson, 1972, pp. 3-8)

Over the last half century, we have entered a stage of societal and technological growth that has exponentially increased the number of changes that we, as human beings, have had to deal with. Population growth and technology have combined to change a whole system of human interactional patterns and the long term effects have yet to be comprehended, if at all, even imagined.

Despite these massive changes, there still exists an undercurrent of thought that as human beings, we should be able to adapt and cope with all of the presently incoming information in a more "tidy" or logical manner. But do we?

Psychology has attempted to define how individuals are affected by their environment and how they in turn effect their environment. Stimulus-response theories, positive disintegration theory, learning theory, personality theories, perceptual theories, existential theories, phenomenological perspectives and common sense approaches have resulted in a variety of different techniques for dealing with human behavior and problem behaviors. Despite a deluge of valuable research and theorizing, we are still left with many discrete pieces that fail to form a pattern that well explains the manner in which we function as

individuals and members of society. However, in recent years, a more interdisciplinary approach to the sciences has resulted in an attempt to explain interactional patterns within the milieu of the environment. Offshoots from this approach have led to more encompassing interpretations of our individual and group behaviors.

Part of the simplest reason for the acceptance of a systems approach is in that the system is the explanation. Rather than focusing on isolated behaviors, the interactional approach encompassed a more global or universal starting point. It looked at "wholes" rather than "parts." While it was also necessary to look at these "parts" in order to analyze "wholes," the concept of these "parts" making up a system of "patterns that connect" (Bateson, 1979) shifted the focal point from thinking and describing individual behaviors to a different level of thinking and describing--a "meta" level. Reductionistic tendencies and redundancies were slowly being eliminated in the light of a shift in ways of thinking and describing events, situations and perspectives. Once the shift in levels of thinking and perceiving were recognized, a difficulty arose with the language as it was used to define and describe various levels. Not only did a shift in perception occur but also the quintessential elements in the structure of grammar and language had to be shifted as well.

It is not that all of these essentials were immediately recognized. The basics of the "wholistic" and "metaphysic"

approaches had been debated for centuries by philosophers and scientists. The difference was in the general acceptance and further understanding brought to a conscious level in "using" language. Wittgenstein stated this eloquently when he said: "Like everything metaphysical, the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language" (Anscombe & Von Wright, 1967, p. 12e). That we communicate in other ways and receive communication -- visually, kinesthetically, auditorially -- has been substantiated and developed as a therapeutic aid to communication in the form of neuro-linguistic programming. This sensory related art of communication was outlined as an extension of the work of Milton H. Erickson. These patterns of effective communication were defined by Bandler and Grindler (1979), Cameron-Bandler (1978), and Delozier (1979).

However, addressing communication as communication became another matter. Because a shift in levels of descriptions was required, the flexibility and limitations of language became blatantly obvious. As Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) have stated, "We are in constant communication and yet we are almost completely unable to communicate about communication" (p. 36).

To make compensation for levels of language that were now required, what is now known as the theory of levels of language was developed by Carnap (1942) and Tarski (1947). It was analgous to the theory of logical types proposed

earlier by Whitehead and Russell in *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13). This provided a vehicle for speaking about language which in turn enabled scholars to propose other models of communication and how we structure our communication in light of our experience and growth.

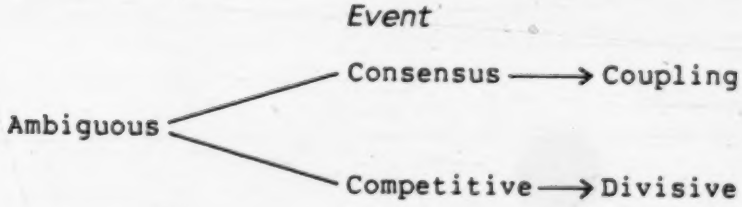
This structure of personal communication was further described by Keeney (1983) when he defined the structure as "punctuating" communication, and the system of communication as a "cybernetic system" which operates on different levels.

Von Foerster (Note 1) states that in terms of integrating experiences, the observer describes only what is observed and the emphasis is placed on the observer for the choice of language. The observation can be described only from the point of view of the self and the self is a self-contained autonomous and organizationally closed system or entity. Inherent in this is his supposition that everything we say is therefore ambiguous. The logic of perception is not the logic that is learned in school. No logic can account for the fact that you cannot see what you cannot see. This leads back to the idea that any statements about what is perceived are self-referential statements.

Keeney (1983) comments about language systems that we use when he states: "we make choices regarding the patterns we discern" (p. 25) and "that although language, through the limits of its particular terms and structures, constrains our knowing, double description provides a way of using language to direct us towards a higher order of description"

(p. 38). It is the double description that is of importance here in that it provides a method of separating communication into different levels of description.

It is the essence of this thesis to look at the process of what happens between two partners (ie: therapist and client) who somehow agree to communicate realizing this is physically impossible but in order to do so realize also that a joint decision must be reached. Since what is said is ambiguous, what happens in the communication process?



This thesis proposes to look at the above model and the processes involved. In order to do so, it is necessary to understand the emphasis placed on a communication system by earlier theorists and clinical practitioners to see how they approach communication, its structure, its experiential framework, and the language selected. This objective fits the "systems" approach. An overview of communication--both verbal and nonverbal--is provided. The parts of communication are described here in order that we may look at the total system.

The last chapter combines the third and fourth chapters by discussion into a framework which presupposes within the theraputic situation, a model by which both therapist and client can either agree or disagree to communicate and the

implications within this model for theraputic change.

B. Background to the Thesis Topic

Since process is an inherent part in growth, change and development, it appears necessary that some information be provided explaining the selection of this thesis topic. This is a description of events to add structure to the process which led to the formation of this thesis.

The process began several years ago when the author enroled in a drama course which included in its curriculum a section on mask work. Part of one particular exercise involved donning a reversible mask with no eyes and proceeding from there to progress through a carefully constructed maze of furniture. The mask was reversible in that it could be worn in one of two ways--with one face that gave the appearance of having a long forehead, short nose, narrow closed eyes and a shorter mouth and chin, or it could be turned upside down and worn giving the appearance of having a short forehead, short nose, narrow closed eyes and long mouth and chin area. To describe the appearance directly, one mask gave the impression of an intelligent thoughtful person, while the other gave the appearance of a dull-witted, slow moving individual. The wearer of the mask was not given any clues as to which way the mask was placed. An audience watched as the wearer of the mask proceeded through the maze.

Each face on the mask appeared to provide a different contextual approach to solving the difficulties of working through the maze blindfolded. On the one hand, the impression given the audience was that a very thoughful methodical person was making intelligent selections about how to go through the maze blindfolded. A great deal of care seemed to be given to each step as well as patience with errors that were made.

When the mask was reversed and the maze changed, the wearer appeared to the audience to be clumbsy, impatient, constantly fumbling and very indecisive when an error was committed. After watching this exercise, the author was puzzled by the differences that the audience had observed in the behavior of the subject knowing that the subject was unaware of the mask's appearance.

Although to some experts in communication, the answer may have been quite obvious, to the author, new questions in perception and communication came to the forefront. Without the use of language, general impressions of the subject's strategies in problem resolution had been formulated by the observers. At the time, the most pervasive question was, "How could this possibly happen?" The only apparent answer was that each individual perceiver attaches own very specific connotations to the events or situations at hand and that these connotations were the sum/total of each individuals' experiences.

Some years later, after having read several books on the mask as well as doing graduate work in educational psychology, the author chanced on an article in *Scientific American* (1975), entitled, "Mathematical games: The curious magic of anamorphic art" by M. Gardner. By this time the work of Bateson, Erickson, Watzlawick and several other authors dealing with structure, organization, communication and change had made an impact on this author's thinking and perceptions of how we perceive and structure our experiences and try to make "tidy" all of the events in a complicated world.

The article on anamorphic art shed additional light on perception and structuring experiences. Originally, the concept of altering perception became an interesting dilemma. However, it was becoming more apparent that what we perceive is always interpreted so that we may define "what is" according to experience and/or rules of order. That we as living organisms seek to give order and meaning to our perceptions is unquestionable. Bateson (1979) had earlier proposed that "science is a way of perceiving and making what we call sense out of our precepts" (p. 31).

Drawing upon Bateson's definitions of science, one could extrapolate that we have constructed rules and orders about "things" and the rules and orders are conversely limited and expanded by our manner of perceiving. Mathematical constructs are directly related to our perceptual constructs which also define logical constructs.

As in perception, there are geometric constructs which defy our "scientific logic." It is out of necessity that we have so defined them. If we propose to measure something (ie: time, energy, light), we use a measuring device that accommodates our perceptual abilities. We are then measuring a perception of our perception.

Further readings in the topic of hypnosis and the psychotherapy employed by Milton H. Erickson opened up other aspects of communication. It was Erickson's belief that all people communicated in a conscious language and an unconscious language. The language of the conscious was the spoken language and the unconscious language was condensed with no sense of time. It appeared in the form of body movements, vocal intonations, metaphors and analogies that were implicit in verbal speech. Haley (1973) commented on Erickson's definition of the "unconscious awareness" by saying:

> To have an interchange with another person through an "unconscious" means of communication, we must at some level be cognizant of what we are doing or we could not correct ourselves or receive the other person's communication and respond to it. Yet this process can go on without any conscious awareness of what we were doing. Therefore there must be, at least, two levels of "awareness" when we are interchanging at two levels, at least, of communication. (p. 546)

Erickson viewed any interpersonal relationship as requiring some sort of joint participation and experience. Out of his concepts came the experimental "Confusion Technique" in hypnosis.

The idea for the development of the technique began in 1923 while Erickson was at the University of Wisconsin. It evolved from an incident whereby Erickson accidentally was bumped by a man on the street. Rather than providing any logical response in such a situation, Erickson gave the man the incorrect time of the day as if it had been politely requested. The man was left standing there in bewilderment.

As a result of this incident and others, Erickson viewed this and other occurrences of comparable character, subsequently identifying a number of psychological elements indigenous to the specific occurrences. The identification of these elements led Erickson to develop a specific outline that could be adapted to individual situations where a client desired some form of change but at the same time offered resistance to change..

The technique itself was first used to induce hypnotic age regression. However, further use of it led to its application to other experimental and clinical work. Erickson employed it in the demonstration of spatial orientation found in schizophrenics. The concept of spatial orientation was at this time conceived by Erickson as "manifestations of equal existence and co-existence of two separate spatial concepts of the self" (Haley, 1967, p. 329). Subsequently, the confusion technique was utilized to demonstrate how a schizophrenic could perceive himself as being in two different spaces simultaneously.

At present, the technique is used as an induction technique in hypnosis as well as for clinical purposes in isolated cases. Since Erickson's experiments, little research or detailed discussion exists as to the general applicability of the technique outside the trance state. In hypnotic induction, it has basically been employed to circumvent the resistance of a client in order to induce a trance and promote age regression.

Gestalt therapists such as Perls advocated general strategies for dealing with confusion in clients. The emphasis was placed in going with the confusion, accepting it and by doing so, resolving the confusion. The difficulty here is with the unconscious acceptance of the confused state. No provision is made that specifically deals with the resistance of the client in fully accepting the situation at an unconscious level.

Although the confusion technique advocated by Erickson has parameters of applicability inherent in its constructs, the concept itself may have a wider application than that defined by the induction of a trance or hypnotic state. It is a moot point to argue the existence of confusion as a part of normal individual functioning and that many who seek counselling are in a confused state.

In part, the confused state results from communication problems with ourselves and with others and how we perceive ourselves within our world. Obviously there are ambiguities in the interpretation of communications in any type of

interpersonal relationship. If it is perceived that there will be ambiguities in communication upon encountering an interpersonal relationship, then what elements of communication either increase the confusion or lead to an agreement that we are connmunicating?

The above recollections and thoughts have led to the formulation of some very basic ideas about perception and communication which will be further discussed in this thesis.

C. The Selected Format of This Thesis

This thesis is a discussion of the elements involved in the communication process and how ambiguities arise as a result of these elements. The author has attempted to clarify some of the concepts of the theory of communications for therapy. As Bateson (1979) has stated: "Theory is not just another gadget which can be used without understanding" (p. 237).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Gregory Bateson

Bateson was an anthropologist and expert on interactional human communication. His two major books *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) and *Mind and Nature* (1979) are of special relevance to concepts proposed in this thesis. It is Bateson's work that led the author of this thesis to construct some of the ideas contained herein. Bateson is difficult to summarize. Much of what he says is of a progressively constitutive nature. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) is a series of published articles arranged in an order that proposed, for the time it was published, "a new way of thinking about ideas and about the aggregates of ideas ... called minds" (Introduction, p. xv) or ecology of mind. In *Mind and Nature* (1979), he attempted to establish "patterns that connect" these aggregates of ideas through the interdisciplinary studies of anthropology, biology, psychiatry and genetics. The issue, for Bateson, first was one of "what pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me?" (p. 8). This issue was then extended not only across species but to the manner in which all things behaved in their environment or context. It is a description of process, an initial description.

The referential base for Bateson's ideas proceeded from two beliefs inherent to his thinking: a belief in cybernetic

epistemology and a belief that no independent reality truly exists.

The central idea in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) is phrased by Engel in his Preface to the book:

> We create the world that we perceive, not because there is no reality outside our heads (the Indonesian war is wrong, we are destroying our ecosystem and therefore ourselves, whether we believe it or not), but because we select and edit the reality we see to comform to our beliefs about what sort of a world we live in .... For a man to change his beliefs ... he must first become aware that reality is not necessarily as he believes it to be. (p. vii)

Bateson (1972) viewed the history of evolutionary theory as a metalogue between man and nature which metaphysically recreates the evolutionary process. As such, he began his book with a series of metalogues (conversations about a subject where a problem is discussed but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject)(1972, Part I). He discussed form and pattern in anthropology and relationship, then biology and evolution, and epistemology and ecology. As a summary chapter, he presented crises that loom about us should we maintain our present manners of thinking and behaving. It is necessary to conceive of ecosystems rather than individual or isolated actions if we are to preserve our universe.

In *Mind and Nature*, Bateson (1979) listed six criteria of mind:

> 1. Made of parts which are not themselves mental. "Mind" is immanent in certain sorts of organization of parts.
> 2. The parts are triggered by events in time.

> Differences though static in the outside world can generate events if you move in relation to them.
> 3. Collateral energy. The stimulus (being a difference may provide no energy but the respondent has energy, usually provided by metabolism.
> 4. The causes-and-effects form into circular (or more complex) chains.
> 5. All messages are coded.
> 6. There is the fact of logical typing. (pp. 234-235)

These six criterion basically summarize the premises contained in the book regarding the inseparability of mind and nature.

Bateson's (1979) suppositions stem from an explanation provided in the final metalogue, "So What?"

> Father: My opinion is that the Cretura, the world of mental process, is both tautological and ecological. I mean that it is a slowly self-healing tautology. Left to itself, any large piece of Cretura will tend to settle toward tautology, that is, toward internal consistency of ideas and processes. But every now and then the consistency gets torn up; the tautology breaks up like the surface of a pond when a stone is thrown into it. Then the tautology slowly but immediately starts to heal. And the healing may be ruthless. Whole species may be exterminated in the process.
>
> Daughter: But, Daddy, you could make consistency out of the idea that it always starts to heal.
>
> Father: So, the tautology is not broken; its only pushed up to the next level of abstraction, the next logical type. That's so. (p. 228)

Bateson's work has influenced other writers, particularly those who are subsequently discussed in this chapter.

B. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson

Paul Watzlawick has written extensively on communication. In conjunction with other authors (Beavin, Fisch, Jackson and Weakland), he has focused his attention on communication patterns with the emphasis on therapy and change.

In *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (1967), the focus is placed on communication as an interactional process in which there is a relationship that is qualitatively different than the individuals involved. The authors' approach to the subject matter is to first establish a frame of reference for this interactional view of communication. The frame of reference is the behavioral effects of communication or the pragmatic effects of communication while keeping in mind that all communication occurs in a context and that all communication patterns are circular in that there is no beginning and no end to the patterns. There is a continual process of feedback where each individual influences the other and in turn is influenced by the other. To indicate that any individual reacts to another, without realizing that influence upon the other by this reaction, is too linear and does not explain systems where there are feedback loops, and human interactions are viewed as systems with feedback loops.

Some tentative axioms of communication are established (refer to Chapter Four of this thesis). The axioms are informal and preliminary and are unified through their

pragmatic importance and interpersonal reference. All situations or events are interpersonal and therefore include the relationship aspect. Once the authors define these axioms, they proceed to relate them to pathological communication. In other words, they look at ways in which the basic patterns become distorted. They identify these distorted patterns by referring to paradoxes, double-binds, contradictions and non-sequiturs. Essential to all their basic premises regarding communication is that it is impossible not to communicate. Saying nothing in an interaction is in itself a communication. As such, they look at two pragmatically important modes of communication: the digital and the analogic mode.

The digital mode is similar to the verbal aspect and is described in detail in Chapter Three of this thesis. Digital expressions are defined as arbitrarily assigned words and are "manipulated according to the logical syntax of the language" (p. 61). They in no way resemble the thing named. Analogic communication is all nonverbal and can be more readily referred to the thing it stands for. It is defined in more detail in Chapter Four. The authors suggest that analogic communication has its roots in the more archaic periods of evolution.

Watzlawick et al (1967) provide a comparison between digital and analogic modes that clarify their differences:

> No amount of listening to a foreign language on the radio ... will yield an understanding of the language, whereas some basic information can fairly easily be derived from watching sign language and

> from so-called intention movements, even when used by a person of a totally different culture. (p. 62)

Of the two types of interpersonal interchanges in communication, the authors have adopted Bateson's (1972) categories of symmetrical and complementary interactions (refer to a summary of Bateson in Chapter Four). In any relationship, it is common to find a continual shift from complementary to symmetrical and so on. No single statement can, in isolation, be representative of these kinds of patterns. The response of a partner is necessary for classification. When Watzlawick et al (1967) analyzed various conversations between couples and families, they noticed that content faded in importance as a particular pattern emerged. In the breakdown of either pattern, disconfirmation and rejection of the other's self could be observed. Symmetrical relationships in a breakdown pattern tend to escalate where complementary patterns become rigid.

The organization of the patterns of interaction in families is a communication system characterized by properties indigenous to general systems theory (recursive feedback systems). Families are viewed as rule-governed systems that reflect Bateson's (1972) categories. Changes in any family system are regarded as "step-functions" (ie: changes in ways of calibrating a system) which tend to try and stabilize communication patterns which were previously established. Calibration functions to maintain the homeostatis of the system at two levels: at the level of

customary or acceptable behavior and at another level which may eventually result in a new setting at which calibration would take place (ie: change occurs within the system).

Paradoxical communication is given emphasis because the authors believe that it is of importance, both pragmatically and existentially. It not only appears consistently in interactions but also affects our behavior and our sanity. It also challenges our belief in the soundness of the universe. Thusly, a close look is taken at the logical foundation of paradox which "follows consistent deductions from correct premises" (p. 188). Of theraputic importance is the pragmatic paradox because of its implications in interactions. In pragmatic paradox, a choice is not possible thereby placing the respondent in an interaction in an impossible situation because the alternatives are part and parcel of a double-bind. The only solution to change must be generated from within the pattern but can only come from stepping outside the pattern.

Watzlawick et al (1967) consider individuals in their "social nexus" (p. 257) and label communication as the vehicle for this. However, this is only one aspect that they discuss for they also realize that it is not complete. Although the view throughout the book is objective, they also realize that there is no real objective position when they state that:

> Man cannot go beyond the limits of his own mind; subject and object are ultimately identical, the mind studies itself, and any statement made about man in his existential nexus is likely to run into

> the ... phenomenon of self-reflexiveness which ... generate paradox. (p. 258)

Nothing exists outside the world as we conceive it. If we can conceive of something, then it exists. The premises very much reflect an existentialist and constructivist view of the world.

The difficulty that Watzlawick et al (1967) had in expressing views on communication and communication patterns arose from a difficulty with describing process. The description combined an objective view of reality with an acknowledgement that there was, at times, a necessity for taking a stance from an alternate perspective--one of no independent objective reality. They did not clearly distinguish between the two. It was Erickson who accepted the client's view of reality and his words reflect more consistency as a result of assuming a single view.

C. Milton H. Erickson

Milton Erickson was a therapist/psychiatrist whose style and technique has influenced many of today's therapists from Haley, Watzlawick, Gordon, Bandler and Grindler to Gilligan and Carter. "Throughout the years Erickson had developed a view of reality, of people, of hypnosis, and of therapy that was simple, direct, and yet remarkably insightful" (Havens, 1985, p. xxvi). Erickson was aware of the power of an individual's metaphors as self-referential statements in the construction of an

individual's reality. His belief in the use of the metaphor as a communication device with his patients provided a method by which consensual contexts were derived. He used the metaphor as a communication device rather than a vehicle for interpretation. That is one of the aspects of his work that distinguishes him from other therapists--his "unwillingness to interpret to people what their metaphors mean" (Haley, 1973, p. 28).

Erickson maintained that the therapist should "take what the client brings to you" (Havens, 1973, p. 187), and avoid detailed analysis and interpretations with the client. Therapy should be aimed towards what the patient deems as forward movement, growth and fulfilling self-defined needs--not just change for the sake of change or stability for the sake of stability but rather a recursive process of change/stability. It was a therapy of "doing" not just a therapy of "awareness," and dealt with the present and the future as the client perceived it. Haley (1973) summarized Erickson's work in the following way:

> It is easier to say what Erickson does not do in therapy than to say what he does, except by offering case examples. His style of therapy is not based upon insight into the unconscious, it does not involve helping people understand their interpersonal difficulties, he makes no transference interpretations, he does not explore a person's motivations, nor does he simply recondition. His theory of change is more complex; it seems to be based upon the interpersonal impact of the therapist outside the patient's awareness, it includes providing directives that cause changes of behavior, and it emphasizes communicating in metaphor. (p. 39)

Although Erickson's words often appear relatively simple,

the underlying components of his messages are not. His meaning often shifts and changes slightly as more of his words are assimilated. The problem with understanding what Erickson has to say is that each of his statements is invariably interpreted from within our own framework of understanding. Erickson was familar with this natural process of distortion and misunderstanding and would often remind his students, "Don't ever, when you are listening to a patient, think you understand the patient, because you're listening with your ears and thinking with your vocabulary. The patient's vocabulary is something entirely different" (Zeig, 1980, p. 58). Later Erickson adds: "We always translate the other person's language into our own language" (Zeig, 1980, p. 64).

In order to fulfill his responsibility as a therapist, Erickson depended on careful observation of human behavior. His previous experiences and bouts with polio had provided him with opportunities to observe others and himself closely. In order to claify some of his beliefs, he would often comment that people had two modes of functioning: a conscious and an unconscious mode (which differed from some of the Freudian beliefs). Havens (1973) comments on the distinction that Erickson made between the two:

> The conscious mind ... represents a prejudiced and limited perspective on reality which can result in various distortions and behavioral anomalies. The unconscious mind, on the other hand, is a flexible system of thought and awareness that perceives and responds to the literal or objective qualities of reality. It is relatively unprejudiced, is very intelligent, and contains a vast reservoir of

> previously acquired, experientially based knowledge and memories. It serves the needs of the conscious mind and protects it from painful or unacceptable stimuli. (p. 458)

According to Erickson's view, the metaphor was an effective and parsimonious method of accessing unconscious processing through the medium of the conscious mind. It provided a vehicle for transforming description or explanation into a type of "gestalt" and allowed the listener (or client) to receive a communication in the form of patterns--whether verbal or behavioral or a combination of both. This characteristic made it qualitatively different from strict literal phraseology which usually imposed a set of propositions or a single proposition upon the client. As with all propositions, a client could deduce that the proposition would hold true for some situations but left an opening for those cases (and everybody could quote exceptions to the rule) where there was always "yes, but ..." or "what if ...." Not only that, but propositions could frequently be rationalized and analyzed by the client in similar patterns in which they were already having difficulty. Within the metaphor, there were myriads of opportunities to positively reconstruct a "reality," which in itself is a highly complex and/or idiosyncratic set of dynamics.

Erickson's awareness of an individual's different patterns of nonverbal communication is reflected in his statement that:

> A person seeking therapy comes in and tells you one story that is believed fully at the conscious level and in nonverbal language can give you a story that is entirely different. (Erickson and Rossi, 1976, p. 68)

It is important to remember that the story here may be entirely different, not contrary to the verbalized story and that any direct interpretation of the client's nonverbal language is difficult. The patterns of communication are inherently of more value than is any simple interpretation of a communication.

Erickson believed that it was the responsibility of the therapist to help clients perceive, accept and respond to their realities realistically. But the problem of the therapist was how to motivate the client to undergo the transformations and reorganizations of thought and behavior that would allow more effective use of the client's potential. Each client was unique and any goal of therapy was limited and specified by each client. Ultimately, change was the responsibility of the client, not the therapist. He believed that "therapists do not do therapy: they provide conditions that motivate and enable patients to do it" (Havens, 1973, p. 459).

Although Erickson did not generate formal theory, he did provide a method to talk about an individual's perspectives and reality by utilizing the verbal expressions of the individual. He recognized the limitations of a translator who was listening and interpreting someone else's

reality.

D. Heinz von Foerster

Von Foerster (1984) has put forth his ideas about the manner in which we perceive and describe our world and the systems persuant to those perceptions and descriptions. Of application to this thesis are three articles from *Observing Systems* (1984) entitled, "Perception of the Future and the Future Of Perception," "Notes on an Epistemology of Living Things" and "On Constructing a Reality."

According to von Foerster, what is needed is a theory of the observer, since he views all statements as being made by an observer in the position of stating what is observed. Consequently, all description is self-referential and subject to paradox. It follows that there is no such thing as an independent objective reality. He acknowledges that we do fall into the trap where we continually assume an independent objective reality and this, in part, accounts for some of the difficulties we have in sorting out happenings in the universe and the world. Much of what we believe to be part of that independent objective reality inhibits our ability to look for alternate solutions to problems are plaguing us today. It is essential that we begin to take alternate views and begin to ask "legitimate questions" (ie: questions for which the answers are not known) to get out of the dilemmas in which we have placed ourselves.

The difficulty in accepting the notion of a subjectiveless universe and accepting an objective description leads to classic paradoxes from which there is no exit. To avoid these situations, it is necessary to account for an "observer" with the idea that

> (i) Observations are not absolute but relative to an observer's point of view ... (ii) Observations affect the observed so as to obliterate the observer's hope for prediction. (p. 258)

This takes us from the present method of scientific enquiry which seeks to answer the question "What do we know?" to asking "How do we know?"

Von Foerster's work recognizes two distinct parts: the independent objective reality, and no independent objective reality. Consequently, he is able to discuss matters in ways that clarify formerly contradictory issues in science and language.

E. Humberto Maturana et al

Maturana has written two provocative articles which bear relevance to this thesis. One, "Biology of Cognition" has become part of a book which was co-authored with F. J. Varela and is called *Autopoeisis and Cognition* (1980). The second article, as yet unpublished, combines Maturana's original ideas of cognition with structures which are therapeutically viable. The article is called "The Bringing Forth of Pathology" (1986) and is of importance here. It is co-authored with two Chilean therapists, Mendez and Coddou.

Maturana (in Maturana & Varela, 1980) originally conceived of all living systems as closed systems, self-referring and self-constructing. As such, living systems generate aspects of interaction which are constitutive of their language, descriptions and thoughts. Extending this concept to the process of therapy, Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (1986) have operated from the premise that there is no real independent objective reality (ie: a single commonly defined universe, a collective) but that pathology arises because someone (ie: society) claims to have knowledge about an objective reality (ie: pathology, health, mental illness, etc.). As professionals in the mental health field, they claim that it is time to shift our focus. But rather than debating whether or not there really is an independent objective reality or what the constitutive elements of reality are, it is more revealing to understand that

> the phenomenon of knowledge or cognition arises in the distinctions that the observer makes as he or she brings forth in his or her operation in language. (Note 2, p. 4)

The observer is anyone who does not have access to the biological or internal state of the individual. And since no one has access to that kind of information, the observer can be the individual making the distinctions or a participant observing another participant.

If one accepts that there is an independent objective reality (and we all do at different times), then as

therapists we must also be able to put our notions of an independent objective reality in parenthesis. Putting objectivity in parenthesis allows the therapist to turn the power of healing over to the client rather than having the therapist determine what is healing for the client. To distinguish between objectivity in parenthesis and objectivity without parenthesis, the following quotations are offered as explanations:

> When we put parenthesis to objectivity we become aware that sameness is specified by ... the repetition of an operation of distinction. (Note 2. p. 10)

> Objectivity without parenthesis demands a universe, a single domain of operational coherences that supports all truths, and, therefore, a single independent reality as the ultimate referent in the solution of all disagreements. (Note 2, p. 11)

The "ultimate referent" in the solution of all disagreements should, as proposed by the authors, not be seen as an agreement about a single independent objective reality, but rather an agreement in regards to "criterion of validation" (p. 8)--or a set of criterion that defines the issue or situation as proof of that particular issue or situation. Consequently, any systems (ie: family, couple, institution, etc.) "exist while the conditions that define them are satisfied" (p. 34).

In order for the therapist to operate with objectivity in parenthesis, one must recognize that any given behavior is socially determined and cannot be separated from its

context. All individuals existing in social systems are continually changing as a result of interacting and reacting in particular situations. The behavior changes as the contexts change and vise versa. When contradictory behaviors are demanded, this usually happens under the asssumption that they are not contradictory (p. 14) and the participants become unhappy--ie: there are emotional contradictions. The stabilization of contradictory patterns are lived as "sufferings of the mind and body" (p. 15). A family, couple or group, therefore has a constancy that is not independent of them but rather is a result of their participation in a set of dynamic interactions (ie: recursive consensual coordinations of behavior in any domain). If the structures and dynamics no longer exist, then the properties that comprised the system no longer exist and the system itself disintegrates.

The authors (Mendez, Coddou, & Maturana, Note 2) maintain that "languaging is a manner of coexistence, a manner of living together in recursive coordinations of consensual actions" (p. 18) making language a function of social phenomenon. The flow of interactions changes constantly as does our "bodyhood" (p. 19) and we "become our conversations and we generate the conversations we become" (p.19). Two types of conversations relevant to therapy are identified and summarized here:

(a) conversations for coordinations of actions in any domain -- These are conversations which are strictly

concerned with the coordination of behavior, actions or words in a single aspect of communication. There are no combinations of "domains" of interaction. These conversations occur in only one domain at a time.

(b) conversations in which the results are coordinations of behavior in two or more domains at the same time -- Of this type, there are two subtypes. The first is labelled as "conversations of characterization" and these "entail expectations that have not been agreed upon about the characteristics of the participants" (p. 19). The second type is labelled as "conversations of unjustified accusations and recriminations." This latter type involves the complaints that the participants have about each other in regard to unjustified expectations in which there was no previous agreement (Note 2, p. 19).

Only the conversations identified as "conversations for coordinations of actions" do not disrupt the emotional state of the participants because they do not challenge their basic identities. Other conversations (identified as the second type) interfere with the system as they disrupt the emotional states and make judgements about a participant's self.

All behavior arises from the interactions and reactions of the participants in any social situation. These behaviors are identified by the observer as different emotions and moods and the behaviors are either innate (instinctual) or

learned (or in the process of being learned--the "becoming," as Maturana (1980) refers to it in the "Biology of Cognition." Language takes place in the "consensual coordinations of behaviors" (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 21) and all participants are both speakers and listeners at the same time in the proceess of acting and reacting. The world as we know it is defined and brought forth through language as we make distinctions about the world. As a result, "if we change, one happening of living changes" (p. 34).

Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 1) suggest that we change our perspective. Even though the structuralist, strategist, interactionalist and constructivist positions have put an end to linear causation, there still remains difficulties in operating with objectivity in parenthesis. As mental health professionals, we still claim access to an objective reality (health or illness, normalacy or abnormality). With objectivity in parenthesis, it is possible to recognize that there are as many realities as there are ways to generate reality or as Mendez et al (1986) have phrased it, "there are as many domains of reality as there are domains of operational coherences brought forth in our distinctions" (p. 38). If the therapist can put objectivity in parenthesis, it is possible to help the clients do likewise as they operate in their systems.

The article is best summarized by the authors themselves in their final remarks:

> a)to operate with objectivity in parenthesis entails operating in a domain that always allows us honestly to move into a metadomain of coexistence under any circumstances of coexistence; b)if we are aware that we operate with objectivity in parenthesis, then we can act with awareness of our emotions in the domain of human relations and be responsible of them; and c)theraputic success in the domain of human relations consists in helping the consulting person or persons to operate *de facto* or through awareness with objectivity in parenthesis in their domain of coexistence. (Note 2, p. 43)

Maturana has developed a consistent way to discuss human behavior and communication by assuming no independent objective reality in the descriptions he makes. Consequently, there are fewer contradictory statements about the manner in which we function through behavior and language. His descriptions are original and contribute to our ability to talk about our functioning without continually encountering contradictory and paradoxical statements.

F. Bradford Keeney

Cybernetic Epistemology

Keeney (1983) disusses an approach to "understanding understanding" by referring to the notions of self-referential logic, circular causality and recursions. He refers to his work as a "handbook of cybernetic ideas relevant to the clinician" (Foreward).

As a cybernetic epistemologist, he views all living processes as embodying recursive feedback processes. Epistemology basically refers to how particular organisms or

aggregates of organisms know, think and decide (p. 13). Cybernetic systems have two characteristics:

(a) recursive organization must be present, and

(b) there must be a perceptable feedback structure.

Within the structure, the ecological concepts of change and stability provide feedback loops so as to initiate within systems processes for self-correction. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to draw distinctions which indicate patterns of recursiveness and relationship. The traditional scientific method is not a completely satisfactory method as it does not take into account the effects of self-referential participation within the system. The system, which is similar to the autopoeitic system proposed by Maturana and Varela (1980), may comprise a family, peer group, society or the universe. It does not matter in cybernetics whether we deal with one or many. Keeney (1983) postulates that within "a recursive universe, the whole world may be found in a single living cell" (p. 92).

"The more things change, the more they stay the same," and "the more they stay the same, the more they change" reflects cybernetic epistemology in reference to change/stability. To view systems, we require whole brain processing not just left brain or right brain. If it is essential to utilize the whole brain, it is just as essential to be aware of both conscious and unconscious processes entering into the complete system. An important premise in viewing systems, is that the viewer/observer

reflects his/her own particular habits of learning when making distinctions, descriptions or directly participating within the system. In other words, they are self-referential and subject to paradox.

When perceiving or structuring our view of the world, in part or in whole, we construct maps and maps of maps. The distinctions we make reflect our own internal learnings. Therefore, it is important to realize the role of the observer, both his inclusion and participation within the system. According to Keeney (1983), we all have and define an epistemology in varying degrees and utilizing various self-referential concepts.

A Current Therapeutic View

Keeney (1983) formulates the view that therapy becomes a context for a system to find its own adjustments. Both the client and therapist participate in co-learning and co-evolution focusing on mental process. To do this ethically, there should be an examination of how the therapist/observer participates in the system with the realization that "any description says as much or more about the observer than it says about the subject of description" (p. 39). Ultimately, in therapy, what changes is the way in which the system (ie: family or individual) organizes itself to maintain a self-correcting system. If what changes is the structure or way of maintaining organization, then therapy must activate the order of feedback processes that will

enable a disturbed system or ecology to correct itself. Cybernetics looks for both the client and the therapist to connect through corrective feedback. A therapist should be cognizant of entrance into a system. Any correction of distortions requires a reconnection to the more encompassing premises within the relationship.

Each particular situation in therapy requires a unique model. This new model then forms the basis for a new theory which is an aesthetic theory of therapy. Integration precedes the formulation of theory, not eclecticism. Part of defining the uniqueness of the therapy requires undoing traditional ways of looking at therapy and theraputic situations and looking for "patterns that connect" (Bateson, 1979) recursively. To do this, "the therapist needs several basic skills: an ability to vary his/her behavior and an ability to discern and use the effects of that behavior to direct his/her subsequent behavior" (p. 172).

Symptomatic behavior provides a guide for therapy as it is seen as a way in which a system begins to adjust itself. It is itself a communication and can be understood as a metaphor about interpersonal relationships or it can define the ecology of interpersonal relationships. "Family, friends, neighbors, and therapists may attempt to be helpful. Their attempts will organize the problem as either part of a process of self-correction or runaway and oscillation" (p. 112). Rather than attempting to be helpful, it is more encompassing to initiate an alternate form of

higher self-corrective feedback of lower order processes. Thus a more adaptive way of maintaining organization within a system is generated. It is part of the therapist's responsibility to correct doing battle with the symptom, especially when attempts at correction take the form of applying "willpower," "self-control" or "improvement" strategies. The symptom is indicative of a distorted or dismembered epistemology and the therapist needs to join the system and provide alternative feedback for self-correction by bumping the system and then letting it find its own calibration.

The therapist is seen as part of the system and is subject to its feedback constraints. Emphasis on objectivity is avoided so that the therapeutic context is not "trivialized." The entire system with its variations of process and levels of complexity must be attended to. "A therapist should adopt the perspective of both pragmatics and aesthetics, control and autonomy, simple cybernetics and cybernetics of cybernetics, and even lineal and recursive descriptions" (p. 92). Each of the pairs in the last statement should be viewed as cybernetic complementarities.

Pathology and health are to be seen as cybernetic complementarities within the ecology of a system. Therapists who attempt to promote health and eradicate human problems are out of sychronization with ecology. Attempts to focus strictly on one variable is unhealthy as both pathology and health contribute to the ecology of a system. An individual

may be seen as symptom free and at the same time display particular symptoms depending on how the observer views him. Difficulties arise when the epistemology of a system (ie: family, etc.) becomes stuck on either one side or another and alternatives or feedback is disengaged from self-corrective patterns. "Therapy becomes a context where a system finds its own adjustments" (p. 162).

The tools of a therapist must include a wide range of skills--from flexible therapist behaviors to identifying patterns that connect and packaging all of these into "three basic messages to a troubled ecology -- a message of change, stability and a relevant Rorschach" (p. 185).

The Traditional Therapeutic View

Keeney (1983) views the traditional orientations to therapy as ones that separate the client from the therapist in a therapeutic situation. He defines a "boxing" and "colleagual" model from the traditional viewpoint (p. 111). The boxing model focuses on strategies of one-upmanship, power struggles, control and manipulation. The colleagual model views the client and therapist as experiencing a mutual growth or exploration. Both views arise from the concept of separating therapist and client.

To Keeney, this is equivalent to separating man from environment. Since he is a cybernetician, this perspective is too simplistic to stand alone. A pattern must be drawn through both sides of these entities. To identify one side

or the other is to break the pattern. To set rigid boundaries or distinctions is to forget that both are part of a more inclusive cybernetic process.

It is the cybernetic process of recursion and feedback that must maintain a continual focal point in therapy. Although language contributes to creating distinctions, the pitfall is to rely on language alone. It is essential to incorporate the concept of language into a larger process.

III. VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE

A. Introduction

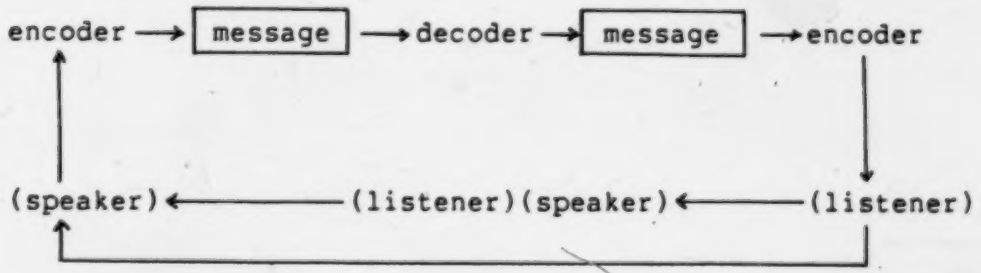
Language learning involves the acquisition of much factual information as well as experiential information. According to Slobin (1972), young children follow similar patterns of language acquisition throughout the world. The pattern follows from the development of vocal skills to the acquisition of factual information, including the names for people, events, and processes to the conventions of pronunciation and sentence construction. Language continually asserts by its syntactical qualities that names or things have qualities and attributes. This is the factual aspect of acquiring language. From the experiential, it is also necessary to remember that these "names" and "things" are made real by the speaker through interactions with the world and also through the acquisition of internal relationships with these "things."

At some point in this development, we learn to assume that language is the primary means of communication and that clarity of verbal expression equates with clarity of understanding or comprehension by a listener. However, our system of representing the world through communication is extremely complex. Although clarity and parsimony in the transference of knowlege or information are often what we strive for in our verbal interactions, we find that many times we are in the position where someone else has not received our

communication in the manner we perceived it to be given and a dichotomy of perceptions by our listeners appears as "misinterpretations" or "misunderstandings." As Maturana and Varela (1980) have pointed out:

> Knowledge as an experience is something personal and private that cannot be transferred, and that which one believes to be transferable, objective knowledge, must always be created by the listener .... (p. 5)

This viewpoint places a slightly different emphasis on our traditional model of verbal communication which had as a basis the following structure:



In this model, the importance for the clarity of the verbal message was placed directly on the encoder or speaker and the listener or decoder was simply a receiver without any apparent active role in the reception of the message. It was assumed that if the message was as clear as possible, the decoder would receive a clear message. Clarity was the responsibility of the speaker.

If we adhere to the communication diagram with its strict linear outline, we find that as we experience a variety of interactions with people, one of the following

has occurred more often in some situations than others:

(a) we have been interpreted fairly accurately

(b) we have only been partially understood

(c) we have been completely misinterpreted

(d) contexts appear completely changed so that what we said seems accurate but its application has been changed or the situation in which we defined ourselves has been altered.

The linear aspect of such a communication ignores many of the variations that occurred in the process:

(a) the experiences of the listener and the speaker as separate entities with the language

(b) the level at which they agree/disagree to communicate and the contexts of each level

(c) the kineisics of each individual

(d) the integration of the speaker/listener process which in itself has a unique set of dynamics.

Therefore, a simple conclusion is that the diagrammed model does not contain enough of the elements inherent in communication to explain the process. The speaker's own definition of clarity does not necessarily affect the outcome or understanding of the message. In other words, the message will not be understood if the message itself does not hold for both the speaker and the listener at the same time. Einstein's Principle of Relativity clarifies this concept by stating that "a hypothesis which holds for A and holds as well for B, will be rejected, unless it holds for A and B

together" (von Foerster, Note 1). Stated slightly differently (with the hypothesis being the message, A being the speaker and B, the listener), we may say that "a message which is understood by a speaker and has as a basis a common language with the listener, will not be understood by the listener unless the speaker and the listener share an understanding of common experience or context with the language in the interaction.

The model has therapeutic implications as well for the everyday interactions between people. If we adhere to the model, then the listener may well interpret messages which would be termed ambiguous by the speaker (ie: confusion results). Adherance to any model without due consideration for the listener would give rise to incomplete or ambiguous interpretations. Similarly, adherance to any model or therapy without evaluation of the manner in which the client communicates makes less likely the chance of therapeutic improvement.

If the function of language or verbal communication remains in this sort of model, then it will do very little to explain the complexity of our verbal patterns of interactions. We need to shift our focus and see what alternative perspectives we can approach this concept from. The shift in perspective away from the aforementioned traditional linear model that this chapter proposes to look at is best summarized by Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2):

> When we speak of talking and listening we do not refer to sound production and reception only, but we refer to any acting and reacting that takes place as part of the structrural changes involved in an ongoing process .... As such talking and listening take place simultaneously in all the participants of any particular languaging process, and each of them is a speaker and a listener both to the others and to himself or herself. (pp. 30-31)

> If it appears acceptable to talk about transmission of information in ordinary parlance, this is so because the speaker tacitly assumes the listener to be identical with him and hence having the same cognitive domain which he has (which never is the case), marvelling when a 'misunderstanding' arises. Such an approach is valid, for man created systems of communication where the identity of the sender and receiver is implicitly or explicitly specified by the designer, and a message, unless disturbed during transmission, necessarily selects at the reception the same set of states that it represents at the emission, but not for natural language. (Maturana and Varela, 1980, pp. 32-33)

B. Verbal Communication and the Evolution of Context

In the past few years, the emphasis on how we communicate has shifted from verbal communication as a means of transmission of information and ideas to include verbal communication as a function of socialization in which the messages are made real by the dynamics of the interactions of the people involved. Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) reflect such a shift in emphasis when they state that:

> Language is not a means to transmit knowledge or information. Languaging is a manner of co-existence, a manner of living together in recursive coordinations of consensual actions .... Indeed, we human beings exist (as such) in language, and from that perspective to be human consists in being part of a network of conversations (manners of going together in language) .... (p.18)

As such, language is a social phenomenon and therefore, functions as a definition in an evolving contextual framework (see Figure 2) usually determined by the interactive patterns that are formulated as the interaction proceeds. An important point here is that language functions as a manifestation of the evolution of context or "manners of going together in language" (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 32).

Context is determined by the participants in an interaction or as Mendez et al (Note 2) have worded it by "the recursive consensual coordinations of consensual behaviors" (p. 18) that are defined by active participation in interactions or conversations within a culture. Context provides a reference point that will determine the language and behaviors appropriate to the situation. As such, the number of choices of behaviors and types of responses is slowly reduced as rules of context emerge. Maturana and Varela (1980) concur with this idea by stating that:

> Every linguistic interaction is ... necessarily context dependent and that this dependency is strictly deterministic for both orienter and orientee, not withstanding the different backgrounds of the two processes. (p. 33)

Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) also emphasize the importance of context in any conversation or series of conversations. Every context will thus be specified by the interactions of its members.

Consensus to communicate is a cooperative effort. If there is no consensus, then there is no communication or

there is poor communication and a context is not established. When the context is established, the verbal communication is more likely to be understood as the resulting behaviors of each of the participants is oriented toward the maintenance of the interaction. Context evolves from the interaction, it is not there to begin with. Verbal communiction starts an evolutionary process for determining context (Bateson, 1972, p. 155). Prior to establishing a context, the situation or event is ambiguous.

C. Language as a Function of Reality

Any verbalizations made by a speaker and listener will define and emphasize sameness and differences in the manner in which each views the world. It is individuality that determines perceived differences.

The notion of an objective reality has been debated for centuries and there has been no definite consensus on the topic. For purposes of this thesis, the author assumes that there are as many realities as there are ways to define reality, and individual definitions of reality are subject to change over time. Watzlawick (1976) has stated that "ordering sequences in one way or another creates what without undue exaggeration, may be called different realities" (p. 62). It is language that often allows us to generate our realities and our realities are generated by our conversations. Mendez et al (Note 2) have reiterated a similar concept in the following statement: "We become our

conversations and we generate the conversations we become" (p. 19).

It is a constructivist position to assume that no objective reality exists independent of observers. "Everything said is always said by an observer" (p. 9) is the manner in which Maturana and Varela (1980) view this position. Von Foerster (1984) and many others (Keeney, 1983; Bateson, 1979; Gilligan, 1985; and Haley, 1967) assume this view. Whatever is said is said as a result of the observer making distinctions from the domain of observation. Distinction is defined by Gilligan (1985) as "a form of closure, an act of generating boundaries. A distinction is a correlation, a distinguished relationship, an indication of "this and not that"" (p. 199). Language is therefore a tool which allows us to impose distinctions upon our world (Keeney, 1983). It allows us to verbally generate our own realities.

The concept of "no objective reality" emphasizes the concept of individual reality as opposed to a collective reality (objective reality). This is important in the therapeutic situation (and will be discussed throughout the thesis) as therapists are advised by Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) to operate with objectivity in parenthesis or by separating the therapist's notion of reality from the therapeutic situation in order to determine the client's view of reality.

Consistent with the notion of no objective reality independent of observers is the concept that all statements that are made are made by an observer and thus are self-referential statements subject to paradox. Keeney (1983) words it this way:

> I cannot say anything that cannot (or should not) be challenged, reframed, or reflected. This of course includes the statements I am now making .... I cannot avoid paradox. All that I say is paradoxical in the sense that all statements uttered involve self-reference. (p. 115)

Things exist only in language, as language is a vehicle for making distinctions and in that process things are identified. Mendez et al (1986) phrased it as "beyond language there are no things" (p. 38) and Bateson (1972) said, "There are no "things" in the mind" (p. 344).

Messages or verbalizations constitute objects and relationships in the process of making distinctions. It does so by determining patterns that are inherent to objects and relationships. A table is not just a top and four legs. It also has a particular pattern. That pattern along with certain attributes defines it as a table. The same process of patterning applies to relationship. There is a particular pattern that constitutes love, fear, hate, etc. It must be remembered, however, that this is a pattern of relationship. Bateson (1972) provides clarity for this concept when he states:

> Psychologists commonly speak as if the abstractions of relationship ("dependency", "hostility", "love", etc.) were real things which are to be described by messages. This is epistemology backwards: in truth,

> the message constitutes the relationship, and words like "dependency" are verbally coded descriptions of patterns immanent in the combination of exchanged messages .... (p. 234)

It is easier to distinguish the pattern of "table" than it is to distinguish the pattern of "love." Where patterns are not so visible, they must be subjected to repeatedly different interactions until the abstract pattern can be identified (and this is not necessarily a pattern of which one is consciously aware). Part of the pattern will be available to verbal expression and part is implicit in behavior or unconscious processes, and the degree of each contributing to the total pattern is, at any point in the pattern development, arbitrary. Relationship patterns are defined and determined by individual experiences in an ongoing process and are unique and personalized in parts of the pattern where other parts appear more generalized.

Von Foerster (1985) and Mendez et al (Note 2) also acknowledge that there are times when we all slip out of the notion of no independent objective reality, to the notion that there is an objective independent reality. Von Foerster (1984) uses the term "naive realist" to describe this situation. It manifests itself in the following way:

> We seem to be brought up in a world seen through descriptions by others rather that our own perceptions. This has the consequence that instead of using language as a tool with which to express thoughts and experience, we accept language as a tool that determines thoughts and experience. (p. 195)

It is these slips that the therapist has to be aware of as

they are usually indications that there is only one correct objective independent reality that applies to all human beings (as a collective reality).

D. The Message Component of the Model: Determinants for Interpreting Verbal Communications

Statements in verbal communication contain at least two messages simultaneously. They have an information component and a component which defines how the message is to be taken. The information or content component is the literal translation of the message and is termed by Bateson (1951) as the "report" aspect of the message. The component which determines how the messsage is to be taken is referred to by him as being the "command" component and specifies the relationship between the communicants. Towards this aspect, Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) have noted "that a communication not only conveys information, but at the same time it imposes behavior" (p. 51). To clarify this concept, the following example is given and then discussed. It is taken from Watzlawick et al (1967).

Two messages are given in regards to driving a vehicle:
(1) "It is important to release the clutch gradually and smoothly."
(2) "Just let the clutch go, it'll ruin the transmission if you don't."
The content of both messages is approximately the same. Both refer to the importance of releasing the clutch. However,

the command aspects of the statements are different. The command in statement 1 refers to the concept that the statement simply provides some information in regards to technique. Statement 2 includes a command which depending on the nonverbal components may imply that the technique must be carried through and that if it is not, then there may be particular consequences not only for the vehicle but between the two communicants as well.

The content or report of the message makes no assumption about the truth or validity of the message and is usually void of any theoretical abstractions. It is the literal interpretation of the message and as such is a direct message.

The command or relationship part of the message is more often implied than stated although both can occur. It is a set of instructions as to how a verbal communication is to be taken. In essence, it is a communication about a communication. If the command aspect is implied, it is done so through behavioral or nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, intonations, postures and the sequence, rhythm and cadence of words. It is also linked to the complex systems of awareness of self and others and the social interaction of which one is part (ie: context). It may imply that the listener should "do as you are told," "take this as a joke," or "take this as an order," to list some examples. Or it may state these concepts or commands directly. If they are stated directly, they are the command portion of the

previously stated communication and are usually potent verbalizations.

Confusion of content and relationship levels in messages leads inevitably to some of the classic paradoxes. Bateson (1979) gives an example of what a computer would do when complex forms of communication which require responses of relationship are reduced to responses at content levels:

> Epimenides was a Cretan who said, "Cretans always lie." .... When we ask "Could Epimenides be telling the truth?" the answer is "If yes, then no," and "If no, then yes."
>
> Norbert Weiner used to point out that if you present the Epimenides paradox to a computer, the answer will come out YES... NO... YES... NO... until the computer runs out of ink or energy or encounters some other ceiling. (p. 130)

Watzlawick et al (1967) summarize the foregoing by stating that, "Every communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication" (p. 54).

To determine relationship, contextual clues will provide for clarity of response. Context here refers to the situation or the social interaction in which the communication is taking place. The rules of context, which are defined as the communication progresses, determine the type of response. The meaning of a given message changes relative to the evolving rules of context (Bateson, 1979, p. 128) or relative to the changing state of relationship between the communicants. Similar messages can imply different meanings or relationships depending on the context in which the conversations occur. A reply may be appropriate in one

situation or context but the same reply given in the same manner may be inappropriate in another situation. It will be the evolving rules of context which will define the appropriate command response.

Bateson (1972) provides an illustration of inappropriate relationship responses in a particular context when he discussed the responses of a schizophrenic. The context and the evolving rules are ignored or misguided in the response. Bateson informed one of his patients that he would be flying to another city for a conference and would be unable to see him for a week. The patient's reply was, "That plane flies awfully slow." Given the context (patient/therapist interaction), the patient appears to be responding inappropriately on a content level. The patient responds on a relationship level but the contextual cues are confused. In another situation, the schizophrenic's response may be appropriate but it does not nor appear to be so in the current interaction.

When context is determined and response to the content with an understanding of the relationship (or rules of context) occurs then a communication can be perceived and responded to so that a conversation or interaction takes place to the mutual agreement of the participants. Watzlawick et al (1967) have asserted that interactions that occur with rules of context clarified often are more concerned with the content than they are with the relationship aspect of behaviors. In a similar vein, Mendez

et al (Note 2) have stated that healthy conversations exist for the coordinations of actions or behaviors as opposed to conversations for characterizations of accusations and recriminations.

When context is not clarified by an appropriate response, the person who responds inappropriately causes confusion in the interaction. Non-sequiturs cause this particular kind of confusion. Milton Erickson provides an example of this in chapter one of this thesis and subsequently developed the confusion technique in hypnosis. Verbal responses which are inappropriate in the contexts in which they occur are classified as bad behaviors, poor manners, stupidity, and when they occur frequently or continually, they are classified as pathological. However, when they reoccur they are usually indicators that content and relationship responses have been confused.

When relationship is not understood and is confused with content, a number of difficulties arise in the communications:

(1) Paradox occurs--Concepts on member or content levels (from The Theory of Logical Types) are confused with concepts on the next higher class level or relationship level. Characteristics and properties of objects are confused with relationships resulting in unexplainable statements that typically have no appropriate response. Paradoxes result from such contradictions that follow correct deductions from consistent premises. (Watzlawick et

al, 1967, p. 31) Examples of paradoxes are:

"I would never become a member of a club that would have me for a member."

"Be spontaneous."

"I am a liar."

(2) Double binds occur--These are extensions of paradoxes and are characterized as Watzlawick et al (1967) have described them:

(a) at least two persons must be involved in an intense relationship that has a high value for at least one if not all of the individuals involved

(b) the message is structured so that it asserts something, it asserts something about its own assertions and the assertions are usually mutually exclusive

(c) if it is injunctive, the message must be disobeyed in order to be obeyed

(d) it is difficult to decide the meaning of the message

(e) the message is logically meaningless but is a pragmatic reality

(f) no choice is possible, or the choices are very limited in number

(g) if any interpretation is attempted, one of three things may occur:

-meaning is given to the most likely and unrelated phenomenon

-it appears as foolish behavior when any and all injunctions are complied to, but with complete literalness and there is an absence of any independent thinking

-the person may chose to withdraw from human involvement

None of the possible reactions to interpretations about the message is predictable.

(h) double binds prohibit awareness of the contradiction involved

(i) one cannot not react to the message, neither can an appropriate response be elicited (p. 212)

An example of a double bind would be:

> -A mother buys her son two shirts. The first time he wears one, the mother says, "What's the matter, you don't like the other one!"
>
> -If you say this stick is real, I will strike you with it. If you say this stick is not real, I will strike you with it. If you don't say anything, I will strike you with it. (Bateson, 1972, p. 208).

The double-bind is similar to someone who is stuck in a nightmare. The only way out is to change the state or level of responding (ie: waking up from the nightmare changes the state).

(3) Contradictions can be found--In contradictions, choice is logically possible. However, none of the choices are usually satisfactory. As Watzlawick et al (1967) phrased it, "One chooses and loses, or suffers the other

alternative" (p. 216).

(4) Non-sequiturs may be present--These are conclusions that do not logically follow from the premises. An example taken from Watzlawick et al (1967) goes as follows:

> He was happy. I can't imagine this thing [schizophrenia] coming over him. He was never down, ever. He loved his radio repair work at Mr. Mitchell's shop in Lewiston. Mr. Mitchell is a very perfectionist person. I don't think any of the men at his shop before Edward lasted more than a few months. But Edward got along with him beautifully. He used to say, "I can't stand it another minute." (p. 215)

Any continuation of the above patterns of verbal communication on a consistent basis by any one individual would eventually be considered pathological for the communications would appear out of context in any series of ongoing interactions. However, they are part of conversation in normal everyday life and contribute to humor, play, and creativity. If they are part of a context, they are acceptable as communication devices.

E. Summary

In looking at the basic communication model, a number of factors that influence the communication process have been discussed:

(a) the evolution of context in an interaction or series of interactions

(b) language as a function of a construction of reality

(c) the message components of any verbal communication.

Context is an integral part in the delivery and interpretation of a message. It will determine the appropriateness of a response and judgements will be made regarding the type of response. Any messages in isolation or taken out of their context provide the observer with the opportunity for mistinterpretation.

Language is viewed as a manner in which we make sense out of our world. It is a tool which constructs our realities in any interaction. The construction follows from feedback, perception and usually includes assumptions about an independent objective reality.

In using language, there are at least two important components to every message that punctuate an individual's experiences. It is acquired through highly individualistic and complex patterns and processes.

IV. NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

A. Introduction

Nonverbal communication is an inherent part of the communication process. It is a difficult concept to analyze because it is precisely what it says "nonverbal." As Bertrand Russell said in his Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1951), "Every language has, as Mr. Wittgenstein says, a structure concerning which in the language nothing can be said ..." (p.23). Part of this structure revolves around the fact that nonverbal language, as opposed to verbal language, is very much a part of the communication process. Russell was referring to verbal language, but his statement equally applies to nonverbal language. The only manner in which to discuss nonverbal communication is in what is called a language about the language or a metalanguage.

Nonverbal language or communication influences the manner in which messages are subjected to interpretation on a relationship level but it can also stand alone as a communication device. "One cannot not communicate" is a basic axiom of communication as stated by Watzlawick et al (1967, p. 51). Even by saying nothing verbally, we say something nonverbally. As such, this author has chosen to discuss nonverbal communication by summarizing what three theories say regarding this aspect of communication. The three theories discussed in this chapter are the theories

proposed by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967), Bateson and Maturana. Watzlawick et al have devoted a great deal of time studying human communication, Bateson is an anthropologist and a communications expert and Maturana's original training was as a biologist. Although they use different terminology, they essentially deal with similar concepts: a definition of nonverbal communication, the characteristics by which it manifests itself, the contexts for it, and the difficulty with interpreting nonverbal communication.

B. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967)

Watzlawick et al (1967) refer to nonverbal communication as "analogic communication." They infer that the term "nonverbal communication" is

> deceptive, because it is often restricted to body movements only, to the behavior known as kinesis. We hold that the term must comprise posture, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence, rythym, and cadence of the words themselves, and any other nonverbal manifestations of which the organism is capable, as well as the communication clues unfailingly present in any context in which an interaction takes place. (p. 62)

Nonverbal communication is the language of relationship, that is, it defines the nature of relationship rather than making statements about objects or what is termed "denotative statements." It usually is prominent in human life in the form of courtship, love, combat, relationships with animals and pets, dealings with very young children and severely disturbed mental patients and

has always been referred to as "intuition" regarding sincerity or insincerity of human attitudes. In other words, whenever relationship is the central issue of communication, verbal language is almost meaningless.

The characteristics of nonverbal communication are usually expressed in language by what is not, rather than what is. This is so because it has semantics but no syntax, and the semantics have no absolute meaning or value as applied to meaning. It is neither good nor bad and can never be more than "approximations of real values" (p. 64). Because it does not have the logical syntax of language or verbalizations, there is no "either/or" or "if/then" equivalents. It defies verbal rationalization or logic. It is also incapable of expressing negatives or the expression of "not" as in "this and not that." It is relatively easy in verbal communication to say, "I shall not attack you," but to do so in nonverbal language is much more difficult. It is much easier to communicate, "I shall attack you." This kind of interpretive stance often leads to various extremes of behavior in order to convey a message and may ultimately result in the opposite of what was intended in the original message. Watzlawick et al (1967) summarize the following incident from Koestler's novel *Arrival and Departure* as an example:

> The hero, a young man who escaped from his Nazi-occupied homeland and whose face has been disfigured by torture, is in love with a beautiful girl. He has no hope that she will reciprocate his feelings, and all he wants is to stroke her hair. She resists these innocent advances, thereby

> arousing both his deperation and his passion, until he overpowers her .... Here the desperation of being rejected and unable to prove that he does not mean to harm leads to violence. (p. 102-103)

The same sort of message mechanism appears to operate in something as pathological as sexual masochism.

Not only is nonverbal communication incapable of expressing simple negatives, but it has no qualifiers present to in dictate which of two meanings is implied. For example:

> There are tears of sorrow and tears of joy, the clenched fist may signal aggression or constraint, a smile may convey sympathy or contempt, reticence can be interpreted as tactfulness or indifference. (Watzlawick et al, 1967, p. 65)

Interpretation is difficult with no qualifiers or capability of expressing negatives since ordinary rules of judgement and conduct do not apply.

In many ways, nonverbal communication is a symbol or representation of an aspect of relationship. Symbolization, as proposed by C. J. Jung, appears where verbalization is not yet possible or no longer possible (Watzlawick et al, 1967). It may also be possible that symptoms are a form of "a return to the analogic" (p. 106) when there is a loss in abilty to communicate about the nature of a relationship.

Nonverbal communication or analogic communication must occur in a context. The significance of context is paramount to any human communication model. The consequences of ignoring context places any nonverbal behaviors outside the realm of structure and subject to randomness in the

practical world. Failure to recognize the relationship between an event or behavior and the context in which it takes place results in misinterpretation of a message.

Contexts arise in interactions with others. Initially, they are influenced by social norms and/or traditions. Once there is an interaction, context becomes clarified through the series of communications that occur in an interaction. They are not then only subject to external factors such as norms but they are also interpersonal and therefore define the rules within an interaction. Watzlawick et al (1967) maintain that in "a communicational sequence, every exchange narrows down the number of possible next moves" (p. 131). As such, context is somewhat restricting but also determines what can go on next. This establishes the rules of relationship or a stabilization pattern such that considerable economy of rules is achieved after a while. In continuing interactions between members of a specified group (ie: family or couple), this economy is observed in one particular aspect of the relationship and another set of rules are established for another aspect of the relationship. Thus continual interactions of a group are essentially rule-governed systems. When the rules that govern the system break down, ambiguous series of communications occur as the members of the interactions try to re-establish a set of rules as the rules cannot be left unresolved or fluctuating.

In ongoing interactions, context gives clues for nonverbal communication. Translating the nonverbal

communication without the context is a futile effort. It defies purpose and has no application to a communication model. In spite of the fact that nonverbal communication cannot be reduced easily to verbalizations, it cannot even be inferred at a relationship level without context as a guide. Metaphor and analogy function well here in order to bridge the gap in reducing misinterpretation of the nature of relationship in a verbalization. As both deal with patterns and address themselves to patterns that have commonality across various determinants of a relationship, in other words, as they function on the level of relationship, they are the most feasible way of interpreting the analogic or nonverbal to verbal without severe loss of information.

Watzlawick et al (1967) have developed some tentative axioms of communication, which are included here to summarize this discussion.

> One cannot not communicate. (p. 51)
>
> Every communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication. (p. 54)
>
> The nature of a relationship is contingent upon the punctuation of the communicational sequences between the communicants. (p. 59)
>
> Human beings communicate both digitally (verbally) and analogically. Digital language has a highly complex and powerful logical syntax but lacks adequate semantics in the field of relationship, while analogic language possesses the semantics but has no adequate syntax for the unambiguous definition of the nature of relationships. (p. 67)
>
> All communicational interchanges are either symmetrical or complementary, depending on whether

they are based on equality or difference. (p. 70)

C. Bateson (1972) and Bateson (1979)

In "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" (1972, pp. 177-193), Bateson discusses a series of generalizations about messages which are denotative and metalinguistic, where the subject or method of discourse is the language, and messages which are metacommunicative, where the subject of discourse is the relationship between the participants. It is the metacommunicative messages that are of concern in this chapter.

Bateson (1972) had observed the behavior of animals and hypothesized that there occurred a metacommunicative system of signs or signals in their interactions which carried messages about how these messages were to be interpreted. He was referring to the messages of "this is play," and "this is a threat," but he also realized that the same messages occurred among humans. It is the messages and instructions for interpretation of the messages that are of interest here, for they are nonverbal or metacommunicative, as Bateson termed them, and they are messages about relationship.

Upon extrapolating from the observed behaviors, he realized more and more that these were implicit and explicit messages about relationship rather than understandings about objects or definitions of objects. He proposed that in the following example, the interpretation had to involve

relationship not denotative statements about objects:

> When I open the refrigerator and the cat comes, rubs against my legs and mews, this does not mean "I want milk"--as a human being would express it--but invokes a specific relationship, "Be a mother to me," because such behavior is only observed in kittens in relation to adult cats, and never between two grown-up animals. (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967, p. 63)

Upon further observation, he also generalized that these messages could not contain signals of negation and did not have a value component as they occurred in behavior and metalinguistic messages. He suggested that by behavior love, hate, combat, etc. could be proposed but it was up to the listener or interpreter to assign positive or negative truth values to these proposals. This attempt to interpret could, of course, cause countless conflicts in relationships. Three types of messages in metacommunication could be deduced:

> (a) Messages of the sort which we call mood signs; (b) messages which simulate mood signs; and (c) messages which enable the receiver to discriminate mood signs and those other signs which resemble them. (Bateson, 1972, p. 189)

Bateson recognized that all forms of human communication were based on different levels. There were linguistic and metalinguistic levels, ad infinitum, and there were metacommunicative levels (ad infinitum) on behavioral communication. This formed the base structure for his "Communications Theory" and was based in part on The Theory of Logical Types which, simply stated, referred to the theory that a class cannot be a member of itself, nor can one of the members be the class, since the terms class and

members were of a different level of abstraction and, therefore, a different logical type. He illustrates how human beings handle nonverbal communications involving different logical types in the following way:

> There is the use of various communication modes in human communication (ie: play, nonplay, fantasy, sacrament, metaphor, etc.) .... Among human beings this framing and labelling of messages and meaningful actions reaches considerable complexity, with the peculiarity that our vocabulary for such discriminations is poorly developed, and we rely preponderantly upon nonverbal media of posture, gesture, facial expression, intonation, and the context for the communication of these highly abstract, but vitally important labels. (p. 203)

Later on, Bateson (1979) clarified the "peculiarities of vocabulary" for viewing the relationship. He stated that "relationship is a product of double description" (p. 47), and the relationship aspect of the communication comes before or precedes the double description. This relationship pattern develops from learning the contexts of life in the areas of play, exploration, nonplay, etc. The learning of context is repeatable and, therefore, subject to logical typing. If the contexts or sequences of the pattern that specifies a relationship are totally known, it is ritualistic. In many cases, there is no labelling of context and the individual is then in the position where information must be taken information from the events within other contexts or events in the process of socialization. Bateson (1979) specifies a "learning of context ... that is different from what the experimenters see .... Exploration, play, etc. ... are categories of contextual organization of

behavior" (pp. 148-149). These categories of organization are interlinked to other categories of organization so that there may be a similarity and/or difference in each category of behavior. When the categories of organization of behavior are based on maximization of similarities, Bateson defined it as a symmetrical interaction. When they are based on maximization of differences, he called it a complementary interaction.

As examples, the following are extracted and summarized from Bateson (1972):

(a) Symmetrical interaction--If boasting is the pattern adopted by group A, then group B reciprocates by boasting. Boasting is therefore the reply to boasting. The breakdown is characterized by an escalation of boasting.

(b) Complementary relationships--If assertiveness is the pattern adopted by group A, then group B adopts a pattern of submissiveness towards group A. Submissiveness is the reply to assertiveness. A breakdown here is characterized by rigidity in the complementary patterns.

When either interaction pattern breaks down an imbalance in communication results. When symmetry breaks down, it usually entails a rejection of the other and when complementarity breaks down, there is usually a disconfirmation of the other.

D. Maturana (in Maturana and Varela, 1980; and Mendez,Coddou, & Maturana, 1986)

Maturana (in Maturana and Varela, 1980) in discussing the "Biology of Cognition," refers to behavior and conduct as opposed to nonverbal communication. However, the concepts presented parallel Bateson's descriptions of nonverbal behavior and for that reason are included here. Although not a comprehensive summary of Maturana's ideas regarding biology and behavior, what is taken bears relevance to the ideas of Bateson and Watzlawick.

Maturana (1980) provided a similie for the biological description of behavior which neatly packaged his basic precepts.

> Behavior is like an instrumental flight in which the effectors (engines, flaps, etc.) vary their state to maintain constant, or to change, the readings of the sensing instruments according to a specified sequence of variations, which is either fixed (specified through evolution) or can be varied during the flight as a result of the state of flight (learning). (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 26)

Effectors, as Maturana refers to them are "muscular surfaces." There is also a correlation between effectors and receptors (proprioceptor and visual) surfaces such that a particular state in the receptor surfaces may cause a particular state in the receptor surfaces that brings on a new state in the receptor surfaces ... and so on. This kind of activity is referred to as "behavior." However, the observer, either the person eliciting the behavior or one outside the system, describes or interprets the behavior by

alluding to the relations between the behavior as it appears overtly and elements or concepts within that observer's conceptual or cognitive framework and understanding (or niche, as Maturana would word it).

According to Maturana (Note 3), there are two types of behaviors exhibited by living systems: instinctive behaviors or conducts, and learned behaviors or conducts. He defines them in the following manner. Instinctive behaviors are the establishment of certain structures (or patterns of interaction) regardless of the history ot the individual and happen because of the environment (medium) in which one lives, and learned conducts are structures that one has and are contingent upon the history that you have and did live (p. 3). However, "the relevance of a given conduct or mode of behavior is always determined in the past" (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 27).

The behavior of any individual can be modified or changed by another in two ways: by interaction or communication. Interaction occurs in such a way that the ensuing behaviors of each of the individuals involved depends strictly on the behavior of the other. This sets up a chain of interlocked behaviors such as observed in courtship and fight (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 27). In forming the basis for communication, the orientation is dependent on the outcome of previous parallel interactions. The behavior of one individual is oriented toward another individual. Although the present situation is slightly

different from others in the history or background of each individual, they both share a "widely coincidental" range of accumulated experiences or interactions (p. 27-28). No interlocked chain of behavior is elicited. Maturana (1980) refers to the second case as the basis for any linguistic behavior and although learned behaviors embody functions or behaviors that are non-linguistic in origin, they are seen by Maturana (Maturana and Varela, 1980) as the base for present day language (p. 28). The process is explained as follows:

> The second case is the basis for any linguistic behavior; the first organism generates (as is apparent for the observer) a Description of its niche that, in addition to its own significance as a behavior (within the cognitive domain of the first organism, and independently of it), orients the second organism within its cognitive domain to an interaction from which ensues a conduct parallel to that of the first one, but unrelated to it. The conduct thus elicited by the orienting behavior is denotative: it points to a feature of the environment that the second organism encounters in its niche and Describes by the appropraite conduct, and that he can treat as an independent entity. The orienting behavior is for the observer a second order description ... that represents that which he considers it to denote. By contrast the orienting behavior of the first organism is connotative for the second one, and implies for it an interaction within its cognitive domain which, if actualized, originates a behavior that Describes a particular aspect of the niche; that which an orienting behavior connotes is a function of the cognitive domain of the orientee, not the orienter. (p. 28)

Various behaviors may not differ in the neuronal processes which internally occur but rather in the "subdomains of interactions in which they acquire their relevance" (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 34). This gives

them a context dependent nature. Nevertheless, the description or interpretation of the observer provides ambiguity because the observer has no access to the context in which the behavior has occurred before. The distinction of the behavior as appropriate or inappropriate is external to the actual experiencing of the behavior. Either someone else tells you it is appropriate or inappropriate or you resort to some sensory avenues which you choose to believe in more. (Note 3, p. 3) It is similar to distinguishing between a perception and an illusion or hallucination. The distinction can only be made by making it external to the experience. Therefore, all events or sequences of behavior are ambiguous. It is the participation as observers that confirms or disconfirms the behavior and the observer has no access to the contexts of the internal processes.

It is often difficult to determine contexts since an individual is in a "continual process of becoming" (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 35) through endless interactions with others. An individual cannot determine in advance when to change and when not to change a behavior. The appropriateness or inappropriateness of any particular behavior or mode or behavior can only be determined "a posteriori," as a result of actually behaving. The observer justifies the the behavior by references to the past, unaware of the internal transformations that have taken place.

E. Summary

When synthesizing the three theories relating to behavior and its form of nonverbal communication, the following themes appear:

--Whenever relationship is the central issue in any form of communication and establishing the rules of that relationship, it is the nonverbal aspects of our system that help define relationship.

--It is pragmatically important in communicating relationship information.

--It does not translate well to verbal communication as much of the information regarding the nature of relationship is lost.

--There is semantics in a nonverbal communication, but no syntax.

--Nonverbal communication does not express truth, value or judgement.

--Ordinary rules of conduct and judgement do not apply.

--No qualifiers are present to give clues as to which interpretation is the correct one.

--It is idiosyncratic.

--Nonverbal communication lacks the logic of self-contradiction.

--It is difficult to express negatives through sequences of nonverbal interactions.

--Nonverbal communication is subject to fluctuations. It is not stable over time but meaning is assigned to it as

it relates to past experiences.

--It is ambiguous as it depends on observers for translation.

--Contexts for nonverbal communication evolve through interactions.

--It is the language of the "unconscious," the language of symbollic representation.

--Nonverbal communication is of two types: (a) that in which the series of behaviors are interlocked into each other as in instinct, ritual or steeped in tradition, and (b) that which we learn through repeated experiences as we interact as individuals in a social world. The latter form establishes patterns which criss-cross with other patterns of interactions so that many patterns will bear some commonality and yet there will be differences depending on the contexts.

--Because it is as it is, there is some point at which nothing can be said about it--it is nonverbal.

Milton Erickson was an acute observer of nonverbal behavior but he believed that translating nonverbal behaviors into a different form was both disruptive and discourteous. As Haley (1973) phrased it, "it would oversimplify an extraordinarily complex statement" (p. 29). Erickson accepted the behaviors as perfectly valid ways of communicating and would respond in kind. His supposition was that the response communication could be verbal but the only

manner of verbalizing these patterns was through the use of metaphor and/or analogy. For him, metaphor and analogy were more representative of nonverbal communication because patterns of relationship characterize both these forms of expression.

The same would apply to Bateson (1972). However, he would include poetry, dance and art as metaphors other than just verbalizations or conversations, but then Bateson is referring to methods of expression within a culture whereas Erickson refers to therapy. For Bateson (1972), the metaphor "retains unchanged the relationship which it illustrates while substituting other things or persons for the relata" (p. 140). Relata refer to things which are related. In analogy, he viewed a relationship between content and context; "the relations are to be thought of as somehow primary, the relata as secondary" (p. 154). He referred to primary processes and secondary processes in much the same way that Freud defined them, primary process being the operations of the unconscious, whereas the thoughts of the conscious (essentialy verbalized thoughts) were considered to be identical to secondary process. As such, the metaphor and analogy are considered by this author to be more characteristic of nonverbal communication and are included for discussion at the end of this chapter as they are distinct forms of verbal expression indicating nonverbal relationship patterns.

Metaphor and Analogy: Nonverbal Patterns Expressed in Verbalizations

Both of these "figures of speech" presuppose a relationship between two or more persons, ideas or objects. To that extent, they are contextual and must have "patterns that connect" (Bateson, 1979).

Analogy is regarded as drawing distinctions in relationships that have parallel patterns or similarities and these parallel (or linear) patterns are expressed through the use of language. A process of reasoning is inherent in establishing the relationship equivalents. Bateson (1979) provides one analogy that serves as an example of this method of expression: "as form is to process, so tautology is to description" (p. 210).

Metaphor is regarded by Gordon (1978) as

> a way of speaking in which one thing is expressed in terms of another, whereby this bringing together throws new light on the character of what is being described. (p. 17)

In other words, some relationship is presupposed. "New light" is cast on the nature of the description. Duhl (1983) defines metaphor in the following manner and adds a sightly different dimension to Gordon's definition:

> A metaphor is the transposing of one image or association from one state or area of meaning to another, highlighting similarities, differences, and/or ambiguities .... Metaphor is the linkage of meaning - that which connects any two events, ideas, characteristics, modes. And metaphor is hardly only linear and verbal. (p.128)

Both metaphor and analogy have the advantage of providing richness in description of relationships. They condense temporal and spatial characteristics into an identifiable framework by connecting events, objects, sequences or processes. The expressions are extremely parsimonious in defining unconscious and abstract relationship patterns.

They also bear characteristics of nonverbal communication as discussed earlier. Essentially they are symbolic representations of behavior and thought patterns. It can be said of such expressions, that they go beyond conscious awareness. In order to address the conscious mind, we use language--the language used being a reflection of patterns of relationship expressed by the observer.

V. CONCLUSIONS

A. Discussion

In verbal communication the participants are both speakers and listeners at the same time. There is no differentiation between the two if they are involved in a series of interactions termed human communication. The process is thus recursive as speaker and listener are not separate entities.

The message to be delivered is a message which contains two components: a literal meaning (the content and report aspect) and the relationship aspect (the command part of the message that determines or instructs as to how the content or literal part of the message is to be interpreted).

In a nonverbal communication, only the relationship aspect is of consequence. There is no literal aspect except by interpretation of an observer as an attempt to specify meaning in the message. This type of communication (without verbalizations) is a series of behaviors such that each behavior is dependent on the preceeding one. There are two ways in which the series of behaviors pattern themselves:

(a) through chains of interlocked behaviors as in ritual, tradition or instinct, and

(b) through chains of behaviors that are not interlocked but are context dependent for the next behavior.

Verbal and nonverbal communication patterns exist simultaneously where there is language. Patterns of

interaction between participants are established as the interaction procedes. Initially, previous social experiences provide a guideline for context or category of simple action for the interaction, but changes occur throughout the entire communication or series of communications. The rules of context are specified in an evolutionary fashion.

The pattern of communication proceeds in a similar fashion to what Bateson (1979, p. 214) described in his analysis of Iatmul culture. Keeney (1983) modified Bateson's diagram and called it "Orders of Epistemological Analysis" (p. 41). The diagram is retitled here to illustrate the pattern (see Figure 1). It must be kept in mind that the speaker/ listener are simultaneously involved in a recursive feedback process and the messages may at any point be verbal or nonverbal or a combination of the two. The communication may also be terminated at any level. However, where the participants remain the same and repeatedly interact (as with families), the communication patterns will reach the highly complex levels of a contextual framework where parsimony of rules for context is important. For a description of each classification, see Figure 2. As Bateson (1972) views it, form and process are essential aspects of any attempts to describe interactions of any kind where there is more than one participant involved, whether we refer to animals or or human beings in communication with each other.

Figure 1. Analysis of a Pattern or Series of Communications

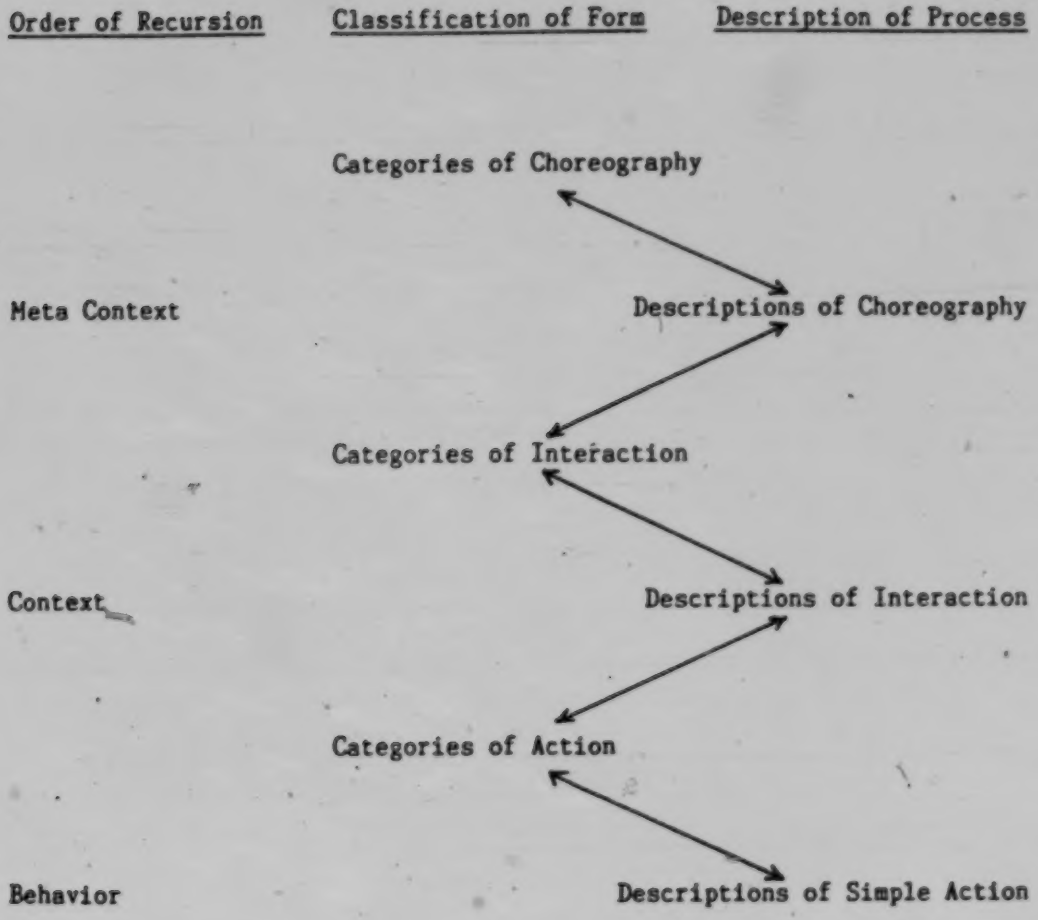


Figure 2. Definitions of Composite Parts of Figure 1:

Analysis of a Pattern or Series of Communications

Order of Recursion

- orders of circularity of feedback and/or calibration
- with respect given to the distinctions drawn by observers

Classification of Form

- typology
- tautology
- refers to the names given to the patterns that organize simple action, interaction and choreography
- an abstraction that organizes each order of description by connecting its elements in a meaningful way

Description of Process

- unit being observed following from how an observer punctuates a stream of events
- distinctions drawn from sensory based experience

Categories of Choreography

- little language for this order of categorization
- metaphor) may be only existing forms
- analogy)
- transcontextual process
- rules of context for choreography

Metacontext

- context about context, ad infinitum
- higher order organization of contexts, or sequences of interactions
- highest order of recursion
- refers to how interactions are patterned as parts of a whole system of choreography

Descriptions of Choreography

- descriptions of how previously identified interactional patterns are themselves identified, patterned, connected or sequenced
- relations of interactive episodes
- (i.e.: healthy dyadic relationships alternate between complementary and symmetrical themes)

Categories of Interaction

- patterns that characterize the relationship of different participants' action
- patterns of relationship rather than patterns of action
- each episode can be classified (e.g.: complementary or symmetrical) then another episode and another classification
- to classify these relations requires at 3 bits of simple action
- rules of context of interaction

Descriptions of Interactions

- any description of simple action must be accompanied by a description of actions of another person that precede and follow it
- fusing descriptions of each participants' simple action
- does not focus on isolated bits of action but on chains or sequences of action that are exhibited interacting individuals or groups
- descriptions are given in terms of sensory based language
- tends to show how bits of simple action among participants are connected
- the ordering of streams of actions is more important than the individuals' actions themselves

Context

- definition of situation in which interaction occurs
- identification of the categories of action leads to analysis of context

Figure 2. (Continued)

Order of Recursion

Classification of Form

Categories of Action

- a way of identifying and naming the pattern that organizes the observed order of process
- e.g.: play, exploration, combat, fight, schizophrenia, therapy, courtship, nagging, withdrawing
- order of distinction is that of behavior
- a way of naming a category of action
- an indication that we see simple actions as meaningfully organized in a particular context
- rules of context of action

Description of Process

Behavior

- statements and/or actions ambiguous

Descriptions of Simple Actions

- observations of singular isolated units of simple action including facial expressions, body position, breathing patterns, eye fixation patterns, voice tonality and volume, speech tempo
- "raw data"
- behavior
- uttered words, phrases and sentences
- "sensory based experience"
- empty of theoretical abstractions

(Adapted from Keeney, 1983, p.40-44)

B. Ambiguities in Concepts of Communication As Applied to the Traditional Model

In the process of communication, the concept of speaker--->message--->listener provides very little information about the process of communication. The major problem with the model when applied to human communication is that it implies a linear, as opposed to an interactional, conceptualization of what goes on when we attempt as human beings to convey any form of message, whether the message be verbal, nonverbal, or both forms simultaneously, and as each communicant subsequently affects the communication of the other participants in a recursive feedback process (Watzlawick et al, 1967; Keeney, 1983, Bateson, 1979; and Mendez et al, 1986). Not only is it a static method of presenting a format, it also separates the speaker and the listener, presenting them as two separate entities. In the process, each communicant is both a speaker and a listeher at the same time as it is impossible not to communicate. (Watzlawick et al, 1967) Any person can communicate both verbally and nonverbally, simultaneously, but one does not need to speak to communicate. As Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) have phrased it,

> languaging consists of recursive consensual coordinations of behaviors, when we speak of talking and listening we do not refer to sound production and sound reception only, but we refer to any acting and reacting that takes place as part of the structural changes involved in an ongoing process of recursive consensual coordinations of behavior. As such talking and listening take place simultaneouly in all the participants of any particular languaging process, and each of them is a speaker and a

> listener both to the others and to himself or herself. (pp. 30-31)

The model also strongly implies through application that in order to achieve effective communication there should be agreement with regard to an independent objective reality (or clarity of message). It is of a slightly different nature to propose that clarity of message does not depend on agreement of an objective independent reality but rather on agreement of a set of criterion which would validate or invalidate the value of the subject of discourse (Note 2, p. 9). And since the message usually is composed of two parts, a content and a relationship aspect, there is a choice as to which part of the message one chooses to validate. If it is content, then the participants or communicants can establish one set of criteria for validation of the content of the message. Where the message is not content but rather relationship then a different set of criteria must be used to validate the components of the message. The criterion of validation in each case are dependent upon the individual's participation in a social milieu. Each participant will have some common criteria and each will have some fairly individualistic criteria depending upon their histories of interaction. In order for the model to be effective as it stands, every single communication would have to rest on the acceptance of an independent objective reality and this is an impossibility simply given the fact that no two people experience and participate in

the world in identical fashions.

Another difficulty with the linear model is that it does not take into account context or rules of context. In any communication, this must be considered as a response is dependent upon preceding responses that may be applicable in one situation but not in another. Also, since there is no separation between speaker and listener, it is a dynamic interaction that changes continually as each participant is involved in the process and the outcome of the interactions are not predictable because of this--except by looking at the interaction immediately preceeding the one in question. It is similar in concept to von Foerster's (1984) analogy of a non-trivial machine when von Foerster identifies the "input-output" relationship as not invariant but determined by the machine's previous action. "In other words, ... previous steps determine present actions" and it is virtually impossible to determine the internal state changes in the machine (p. 201).

The rules of context develop as the interaction progresses. The basic context may be defined by repeated social interactions and a common set of criterion for validation is applied, but as the interaction procedes, changes occur simply through participation in the interaction. Another way of saying the same thing has been stated by Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) when they say that "the agreement of others contributes an agreement about the use of a particular criteria of validation, not the

confirmation of the grasping of an independent reality" (p. 9).

If one believes as Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) and Maturana and Varela (1980), then "languaging" is an integral part of being human. For them, we exist as human beings in language which defines our realities and becomes our realities. It is a continuous process of "becoming" and is linked to all interactions and "coordinations of behavior" that occur through the medium of socialization. Behaviors or actions are indications of the internal state of the individual but are not necessarily subject to awareness. They are however, subject to interpretation by an observer. The observer can be the person involved or someone external to the situation. It is through this interpretation by the observer that ambiguities in interpretation arise. Through language we make the distinctions that generate realities. It is through this process of making distinctions that things, ideas, or concepts exist. Nothing exists independent of the distinctions made. As Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) have stated:

> We have usually lived with many misleading and contradictory beliefs: we have believed that the body has a fixed structure that maintains the constancy of its properties; we have believed that language is a system of communication that handles abstract entities such as ideas, symbols, ideas or information; we have believed that we do not touch each other's bodyhoods with words; we have believed that as individuals we have autonomous self identities; we have believed tht the mind is in the head ... and we do not realize that we bring forth the world in which we exist as we language it. (pp. 32-33)

This statement by the authors summarizes succinctly some of the fallacies that are proposed by the linear model. It is time to look at this process and an alternate viewpoint to explain the communication within a theraputic situation.

C. Ambiguities in the Communication Event

It is not only the traditional communication model that implies ambiguity, but any initial communication event (any initial getting together where there is the possibility for interaction) is in itself an ambiguous event. What occurs initially is "behavior" or "description of simple actions" (refer to Figure 1). Keeney (1983) refers to this as the "raw data" (p. 41). The observers or participants are involved in simple units such as paying attention to uttered words, phrases, sentences and simple actions which are elicited by facial expressions, voice tonality, and other nonverbal cues. At this point, context is not yet defined and the event is ambiguous.

It is not until the participants have observed "descriptions of simple actions" and begin a process of categorizing action that context comes into being. "Categories of action" (Keeney, 1983, p. 42) are ways of interpreting and identifying a pattern that the participants have become part of. This naming or identification is an indication that we see simple actions as meaningfully organized in a particular context and the patterns that are identified begin establishing contexts and rules of context.

Once the rules of context are identifed or a common set of criteria for validation can be established, a consensus or structural coupling occurs between/among the participants. If the rules of context are not agreed upon or are ambiguous, it may become a situation in which the participants each attempt to validate their own rules and a divisiveness or split among the communicants occurs.

This consensus in regards to definitive or ambiguous rules of context and/or a common set of criteria of validation need not occur only at the level of "categories of action" but it can also occur at levels which Keeney (1983) identified as "categories of interaction" and "categories of choreography." Where there have been repeated interactions and sequences of communication events as in couples or families, the rules of context for consensus or divisiveness can reach highly complex levels and become extremely difficult to sort out. "Categories of interaction" refer to patterns of relationship rather than patterns of action (Bateson's concepts of symmetrical and complementary relationships fall under this category). Keeney (1983) states that "categories of choreography" have little language to identify them. The only language that we may have available to us is the language of analogy and the language of metaphor.

Mendez, Coddou and Maturana (Note 2) have identified similar categories using slightly different concepts but they do compare to Keeney's (1983) and Bateson's (1972)

ideas. Mendez et al (1986) have distinguished "conversations that entail agreements for actions" (p. 35) which are similar to Keeney's (1983) "categories of actions." These particular conversations are conversations in which "the results are coordinations of behavior only in the domain in which they take place" (Note 2, p. 19) and are generally monotonic and do not threaten or confirm the basic identity of the participants in a particular interaction. They identify patterns of behavior and are indifferent to objectivity and truth. They become ambiguously divisive when the language they employ violates the theory of logical typing. When Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) refer to analogic and digital modes of communication, they emphasize that inevitable ambiguities arise when individuals attempt to translate from one mode to the other. Stating or verbalizing descriptions of behaviors and placing them into categories of action or interaction involves problems of translation.

Where Keeney (1983) classifies "categories of interaction," Mendez et al (Note 2) identify

> conversations which entail the description of positive or negative characteristics between the participants ... called conversations for characterizations; and conversations that entail complaints for unfulfilled expectations ... called conversations for accusations and recriminations. (p. 35)

Conversations for characterization, accusations and recriminations are different than conversations for coordinations of behavior in that they define relationship.

The former assume truth and objectivity and usually demand obeyance as the speaker is assumed to have authority and claim to an independent objective reality. These conversations "negate the basic identity of the listener" (p. 36) regardless of whether they are positive or negative. In negating basic identity, they could be classified as communications that are divisive rather than consensual.

Any interaction or series of interactions in which participants are in communication are ambiguous events as they depend on the observer for interpretation. As the interaction proceeds, affirmation or consensus of context and succeeding rules of context lead to structural coupling in which each participant brings forth features that constitute a composite unity or terms of agreement with the rules. Divisiveness or competition occur when the features or rules are not in agreement. Where groups or identical participants continually interact, there will be vascillations between consensus and divisiveness. However, engaging in continual conversations and/or behaviors that do not fluctuate eventually leads to a breakdown or pathological communication.

D. Considerations for Therapy

> In a conversation all participants are both listeners and speakers at the same time, and all listen and speak from the domains of expectations, obligations and values, to which they structurally belong in the social and cultural domains which they contribute to generate with their behavior. (Note 2, p. 36).

As such, all communication is ambiguous. Each individual participant interprets perceptions and conversations from an idiosyncratic viewpoint -- in other words, from individualized structures of reality. There is agreement to communicate or a divisiveness in communication and there is little value in attempting to interpret or come to an agreement about an independent objective reality. This implies that the linear model is not a viable notion in the explanation of effective therapeutic communication. It is important that a therapist have an awareness of this and put aside personal notions of an independent objective reality in order to find a way of interacting with the client to effect change. Mendez at al (Note 2) call this process one of operating with "objectivity in parenthesis."

Putting objectivity in parenthesis has the distinct advantage of allowing the therapist to see patterns of communication both verbal and nonverbal in their clients. As opposed to a strict therapeutic model for interpretation, it also provides information of a contextual nature as to how the client views the world. For any therapist, this is invaluable information.

With objectivity in parenthesis a therapist can determine how a client "punctuates" a stream of events verbally and what kind of nonverbal communications are utilized in this act of punctuating. It also indicates that therapists should be cautious in interpreting nonverbal cues as they are extremely complex forms of communication.

All conversations and coordinations of behavior vary with the participants and the issues involved in the communication event. There may be some similarities across interactions as a result of the socialization and aculturation process but there will also be differences. The differences, though highly individual, are equally subject to misinterpretation by the observer.

With respect to the content and relationship levels expressed in any interaction or sets of interactions, the therapist with awareness can discern rules of context that have developed with regards to particular issues in a family, couple or individual. These rules may contribute to an overall disruptive pattern of communication and invoke conversations for characterization (Note 2) which involve unfulfilled expectations and accusations thereby giving rise to frustration and emotions of rejection (p. 37) or escalating patterns of symmetry and complementarity (Bateson, 1972). The pattern of verbalizations follows Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson's (1967) conceptual patterns of double-binds, paradoxes, contradictions and non-sequiturs. Invoking conversations for characterizations indicate difficulties in relationship aspects of any message.

To interpret nonverbal messages literally can result in disruptive states of communication. Behaviors in complex sets of interactions are highly developed patterns which are not easily reduced to simplistic interpretations. It is one

thing to be aware of the kinds of nonverbal communication that a client utilizes, it is another to interpret the behavior reductionistically and simplistically. Too much information can be lost in the translation. To this end, the basic axioms of communication set by Watzlawick et al (1967) and listed in Chapter Four are applicable to any therapist in a theraputic situation, attempting to distinguish pathological communications in clients.

Therapeutic responsibility, therefore, lies in the therapist's understanding that a particular form or model of therapy should not be what determines change for the client, but rather what the client determines as necessary for change. Milton Erickson was a therapist who believed that a new theory emerged for every client he saw. He also believed that a therapist's understanding of the client's situation was limited. In Erickson (1980), he states:

> What a therapist knows, understands or believes about a patient is frequently limited in character and often mistaken. What he is willing to let patients discover about themselves and to use effectively is of exceedingly great therapeutic importance. (Vol. IV, p. 349)

Erickson's beliefs about therapy follow the systemic paradigm and are closely aligned with other theorists outlined throughout this thesis. Mendez et al (1986) concur with Erickson when they state that

> therapeutic success in the domain of human relations consists in helping the consulting person or persons to operate *de facto* or through awareness with objectivity in parenthesis in their domain of coexistence. (p. 43)

This thesis is the author's attempt to "tidy up" some of the questions that were formulated as a result of previous experiences in regards to elements involved in the process of communication.

VI. MILTON H. ERICKSON, M. D.

Each person is a unique individual. Hence, psychotherapy should be formulated to meet the uniqueness of the individual's needs, rather than tailoring the person to fit the Procrustean bed of a hypothetical theory of human behavior.

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